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March 2, 1852.

Vice President Bridges in the Chair.

Letters were read

From the Linnean Society of London, dated Jan. 22d, 1852, acknowledging the receipt of the Proceedings, Vol. 5, Nos. 9 and 10.

From the Smithsonian Institute, dated Washington, Feb. 17, 1852, acknowledging receipt of Proceedings, Vol. 5, No. 12.

From the American Philosophical Society, dated Feb. 21, 1852, acknowledging receipt of the Journal, Part 2, Vol. 2, new series, and of the Proceedings, Vol. 5, No. 12.

From Thomas Lawson, Surgeon General U. S. A. dated Feb. 7, 1852, requesting correction of an error in the Meteorological Register lately issued from the Department, a copy of which was sent to the Academy.

From Dr. Samuel Webber, dated Charlestown, N. Hampshire, Feb. 25, 1852, acknowledging receipt of his notice of election as a Correspondent.

Dr. J. C. Fisher read the following description of the Aurora of Thursday, Feb. 19th, 1852. The observations were made from an elevated point on the opposite side of the Schuylkill, where the view was entirely unobstructed.

On the night of Thursday, the 19th of February last, a most beautiful Aurora was visible throughout the middle and northern parts of the United States. There were some circumstances connected with this one that seem to require a more particular description than usual. The air was calm and clear. The wind was light from the N. N. West. The temperature in the early part of the evening was about 25° F., but it fell very rapidly, and before morning it was 10° F. The Aurora began in the early part of the night with the appearance of a bank or arch of white light, rising about 15° or 16° above the horizon. This continued, with some few changes, to be its general character, till about 9 o'clock, when a series of remarkable and beautiful changes commenced, which, with some alternations of repose, lasted till the whole was lost in the dawn of day. A little after 10 o'clock it presented some of the most remarkable and beautiful. changes it has ever been the good fortune of the writer to witness. The arch or bank of white light which formed the basis of the whole, appeared suddenly to rise and expand like a huge billow, or rather like one of those huge masses of foam at the bottom of the cataract of Niagara, until suddenly bursting, it threw a vast volume of white spray to the zenith, where it changed to a fiery red, giving rise to an alarm of fire. Instantly after streamers of red, white and brown shot up from the broken arch that still formed the basis or ground work, and which at the same time changed from its white color to at first a pale green, and then to almost an emerald green. Soon after the streamers ceased, and waves of parti-colored light rushed across the heavens from west to east, as if in rapid pursuit of one another. This was soon succeeded by masses of light shooting up from the arch, which was again formed, to the zenith. Some of those masses presented a remarkably livid appearance, and the whole formed a picture which it is not in the power of language fairly to describe. During the time when the auroral changes were so brilliant, the electrical state of the atmosphere was in a most singularly disturbed condition. The telegraph wires were so highly charged and conducted so great a quantity, that there were divers and sundry rather unreadable communications written down at the various stations throughout the country, thus establishing its electrical character beyond question. Several persons have said that during the same time they distinctly heard a snapping and cracking noise like that made by an electrical machine when in a powerfully excited condition. This, however, may need confirmation. The photometric power of the aurora when most brilliant, was about equal to that of the moon in a very clear sky, when about three days old. No means were had by the writer of examining the magnetic changes and disturbances. These, however, have been probably carefully noted by accurate observers. From all the phenomena noticed, however, the conclusion is a fair one that this aurora was caused by a highly disturbed condition of the electrical tension of the air, owing principally to calorific causes, and that however high it might have extended into the atmosphere, it undoubtedly rested upon the earth, and that in our immediate vicinity.

Dr. Leidy called the attention of the members to a specimen of the body of a cervical vertebra, from the Eocene formation of Ouachita, Louisiana, belonging to the cabinet of the Academy. It is perfectly mineralized, and both epiphyses are attached, but portions are broken away, permitting the characteristic tuberculated surface of the body to be seen. It very probably belonged to a cetacean animal, and is remarkable on account of the relatively deep concavity of its surfaces before and behind. For the animal to which the vertebra belonged, the name Pontogeneus priscus was proposed.

Dr. Leidy further made some remarks upon the comparative osteology and dentition of the Hippopotamus, and proposed to consider the small species, H. Liberiensis, *Morton*, as belonging to a new genus of Hippopotamidæ, under the name of Chœrodes.

Mr. Lea called attention to a specimen of Dipsas plicatus, *Leach*, which was very remarkable for its size. It was a single valve, and measured in length 6¾ inches, and in breadth 10½ inches. Its weight was 10½ ounces. The heaviest specimen of a *Unio* known to Mr. Lea weighed two pounds ten ounces.

Mr. Lea also exhibited some specimens of Uniones, which were apparently hybrid, but in reality not so, the discrepancy arising from accidental causes.

March 9th.

Mr. ISAAC LEA in the Chair.

Dr. Charles M. Wetherill read a paper intended for publication in the Proceedings, entitled "Examination of Molybdate of Lead from the Wheatley Mine near Phœnixville, Pennsylvania," which was referred to Mr. Ashmead, Mr. Vaux and Dr. Rand.

Mr. Lea read a "Description of a new species of Symphynote Unio," which being intended for publication, was referred to Dr. Leidy, Dr. Ruschenberger and Dr. Bridges.

A letter was read from Amory Edwards, Esq., dated New York, March 3d, 1852, accompanying the donation of the heads of two Gentoo Indians received this evening, of which the following is an extract:

"The Gentoo tribe of Indians inhabit the sources of the Purus river, a Southern tributary of the Amazon. The marshy banks of this river render it so very unhealthy that very little is known of its inhabitants. At intervals a half-breed